

THE IMPACT OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE
MINISTRY FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN
SENIORS IN NURSING FACILITIES

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
DEDICATION	vi
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Chapter	
1. MINISTRY FOCUS	5
2. THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL.....	10
3. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION	17
4. METHODOLOGY.....	30
5. THE FIELD EXPERIENCE	38
6. REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION	44
Appendix	
A. RESIDENT QUESTIONNAIRE.....	52
B. CONTEXT ASSOCIATE QUESTIONNAIRE	54
C. CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SERVICE PROGRAMS	56
D. BAPTIST CHURCH COVENANT.....	60
GLOSSARY.....	63
BIBLIOGRAPHY	64

ABSTRACT

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This dissertation addresses the impact of culturally responsive religious services on African American seniors, specifically those in nursing homes. The context for this study was three primary African American nursing homes located in Cincinnati, Ohio. Methodology utilized exploratory, qualitative research design. Treatment was composed of a series of culturally responsive religious services facilitated by the author at nursing homes. A sample of five participants from each service was interviewed by the author. The evaluation of the study involved analysis of data using a coding procedure summarizing major themes. Descriptive results indicated a positive reaction by the participants to the services.

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I would like to acknowledge the forty-five African American senior warriors who volunteered to participate in this project. Your energy, attentiveness, faithfulness and motivation made this project a success. I would also like to thank my mentors, Dr. Anne McWilliams and Dr. Steven Waller and for their positive encouragement. I would also like to thank Dr. Harriett J. Walton, Dr. John R. Scott, Jr. and Dr. Jackie Baston. I would like to thank my classmates for their great support to me both in the classroom setting and in the telephone calls made to encourage me to remain in the race. I would also like to express my love and appreciation to the three nursing homes, as well as the nursing staff for allowing me to offer these services in your work place. Finally, I give thanks to God for opening my eyes to a new vision of where I can offer ministry.

DEDICATION

This document is dedicated to my mother, Hattie M. Wiley, who taught me not only to never give up, but never allowed me to settle for doing less than my best. In addition, I dedicate this to my children, Kyla T. Payne and Jasmine E. Payne and their mother Nadine D. Payne for their love, prayers and constant support. My brothers and sisters—Michael, Arnold, Anne, Sabrina and Felicia—who have always showed support in all that I desired to do, even when they could not always understand their brother. Regardless, they have always supported my dreams. To so many others, both dead and alive, including the late Rosalind Stewart, and to my many friends, Marion Cokley, Barbara Graham, Troy and Betty White, and especially my Southern Baptist Church family who have always supported me throughout my educational pursuits, thanks to you always. To my late friend and mentor, Rev. James E. Milton, who taught me to follow the voice within my heart. Finally, this project is dedicated to my godparents, Ether L. Carlton and the late Paul C. Carlton for their unconditional love and for teaching me the value of hard work. Dad, you will always be in my heart.

INTRODUCTION

As believers in Christ, we are expected to seek to live as Christ has commanded. This is clear when He commands us to love one another as He has loved us. He reminds us to love our neighbor as we love Him. He implies that we are not only expected to love our brother, but that we should show concern for our brother. In the first Epistle of John 4:7, God commands the church to love one another. By loving our brother, we demonstrate the unconditional love God has for mankind. If we say we love God and show no concern for our brother, then we are not born of God. God is love. *The Interpreter's Bible* states, "Love is of God and God is love; this is the basis to a logical understanding of John the writer in his definition of the essential nature of ultimate reality."¹ In this passage, John the writer encourages us to love one another. This implies that we be concerned about our neighbor.

In this study, this researcher wants to reinforce that our love for our neighbor is represented by the love and concern we must show for the seniors living in the nursing home. The author wants to point out that spiritual nourishment is desired by all born-again Christian seniors who live in the nursing home. In this doctoral project, the author will discuss the need for African American Seniors to receive spiritual nourishment. The author wants to remind the African American pastor of his or her duty to visit the sick and elderly. While many churches visit the seniors in the nursing home by way of the lay

¹George Arthur Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreter's Bible: The Holy Scriptures* Vol 12 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1984), 273.

people who volunteer to go to the nursing home, this does not satisfy the need for direct contact with a pastor. This study will establish that need for the pastor to personally call upon the senior living in the nursing home. There is nothing more uplifting for a senior who is a resident of the nursing home than to see their pastor walking through the door of their room to offer a service much like they were part of before coming to live in the nursing home.

The study will examine the impact on African American seniors residing in local nursing homes after participating in three culturally responsive services offered over a three-week period.

In Chapter Three, the Researcher discusses several reasons why it is so important for African American seniors who are residents of the nursing home to receive spiritual nourishment from the church when they are no longer able to attend on their own. The senior may not be able to attend church not only because they have become a resident of the nursing home, but many seniors have developed medical problems precluding them from attending church outside of the nursing home. While some African American seniors who are residents of nursing homes are able to attend church in the nursing home, many refuse to attend because the services offered by the nursing home can be much different from the services they were part of before coming to the nursing home. For this reason, many of the African American Seniors (AAS) remain in their rooms when the religious services are offered.

In Chapter One, Ministry Focus, the author will not only discuss the need for the senior to attend Culturally Responsive Services (CRS), but the importance of pastoral calls upon the seniors as well. In addition, this author will share his experiences as an

African American Baptist preacher when he called upon seniors (AAS) living in African American Nursing Homes (AANH).

In Chapter Two, the State of the Art, the author discusses other authors' views about offering spiritual nourishment to seniors living in the nursing home. In this section, the author will discuss Jesus' concern for his aged mother before His death. Jesus' words to John and his brother concerning His mother is what this project is grounded in—what we are commanded to do for the aged. As an African American, Baptist preacher who has been providing ministry for more than thirty-two years, this author will cite some personal reasons why it is important for the preacher to offer services to the seniors living in the nursing home. This section will also include other African American authors who share their feelings about the need for pastors to take care of seniors who are living in nursing homes.

In Chapter Three, the author provides a discussion on the biblical, theological and historical reasons supporting why the African American church must care for the seniors who are living in nursing homes. In this section, not only will the author discuss what is expected of the pastor concerning the seniors living in the nursing home, but also the author will discuss the role the church has played in the life of the African American seniors who are now living in nursing homes.

In Chapter Four, Methodology, the author presents a research project conducted at three African American Nursing homes where he facilitated a series of three services at each home.

In Chapter Five, Field Experience, the author poses five research questions that are used to explain the findings of the project. Finally, Chapter Six will reflect the author's

feelings, comments from the nursing staff about the project, and suggestions for further study in this area.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

A Confirmation that God Had Called Me

This author's desire to minister to people living in African American Nursing Facilities began thirty-two years ago. At the age of 15, the author preached his very first sermon, "The Lord Is My Shepherd" in a packed church ranging in age from youths to seniors. Everyone assembled to hear this person who was then "the youngest preacher in Cincinnati" preach his first sermon. It was the belief of the people that the author had received a special calling. It was certainly an evening to remember as the response from the entire group present was truly a confirmation that God had called this author into ministry. There were many that cried out. Some responded by running around the church. But it was clear to all present that the Lord had something for the author to do.

The Rough Places of Ministry

The author felt a strange feeling deep down in his soul very early in his life to preach the gospel to "The Rough Places."¹ Moreover, he also discovered a love for

¹The interpretation of "The Negro Spirituals" as a significant theological tool to encourage and inspire African Americans how to live in "The Rough Place" have been studied as both a comprehensive and conceptual methodology for Pastoral Care in ministry. See: James Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991); Also see Howard Thurman, *The Negro Spiritual Speaks of Life and Death* (New York, Harper & Row, 1947) and John Lowell, Jr.'s work, *Black Song: The Forge and the Flame* (New York: Macmillan, 1972).

seniors early in his life. When other people his age were going out to party, he found great joy in attending the old prayer meetings offered by the elderly. The author learned a lot from these elderly. They shared with him tales of some of the roads that they had been down. They warned him of the dangers that he would encounter as a young Christian. He simply could not get enough of their wisdom. There is nothing that illustrates his call as a pastor more than his desire to share God's Gospel with the elderly and sick.

The seniors' wisdom, experience and love made him very happy. Every time he had a chance he would spend time around the "old folk." The author learned many old hymns and the stories behind those great old hymns. The author calls them "songs of grace." Presently, as the author looks back over his life, he can still feel the spirit and joy that he felt so many years ago. The author's ministry has taken on many facets, including six years of ecumenical service with the United States Navy and eight years of service to those incarcerated in the federal prison system.

The author is compelled to return to his first love—support of the seniors who nurtured him in his early years of ministry. Many of the "old folks" that he speaks of in this paper have passed from this world. However, the author can still feel their spirit and recall their response to the feeling they felt deep down in their hearts. Today as he views the church, the author has discovered that many churches, especially the African American churches, could greatly increase their ministry to the seniors who are living in the nursing homes.

There is a need for the pastor to visit the seniors living in the nursing home. Dr. Temba L. J. Mafico, who is an Old Testament Professor at the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) in Atlanta, Georgia, also supports this position. He makes an important comment, "The important point is that respect of elders holds the society

together. Our elders' experiences in life make them authorized teachers of our history and traditions. They are communicators of the wisdom of the people to the younger generations."²

Therefore, the service we provide to the community must honor and take seriously the overall needs of our elderly in nursing homes. It is through this ministry that our churches must make sure that these needs are met.

Religion and Seniors

The importance of religion and spirituality in one's life can vary with a person's age. While seniors are typically considered to be more religious than younger people, this is especially true for African American seniors.³ Eighty-two percent of seniors indicate that religion is influential in their lives and this percentage increases for African Americans.⁴ Religious expression often takes the form of participation in various religious activities. Seniors identify more with their religion and are more actively involved in religious activities than younger people.⁵ Thus, a lack of available religious activities, as is often the case in nursing facilities, can result in a significant loss for seniors. Religious beliefs can be an important resource, especially when there are significant losses and lack

²See Temba L. J. Mafico, "Tapping Our Roots," in Anne Streaty Wimberly, ed., *Honoring African Elders: A Ministry in the Soul Community* (San Francisco: Jossey-Boss, Inc., 1997), 19-23.

³L.M. Chatters, and R.J. Taylor, "Religious involvement among older African-Americans," In J.S Levin, Ed., *Religion in Aging and Health: Theoretical Foundations and Methodological Frontiers* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994).

⁴M.K. Holt, and M. Dellmann-Jenkins, "Research and Implications for Practice: Religion, Well-Being/Morale, and Coping Behavior in Later Life," *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, Volume 11, Number 1 (1992): 101-110.

⁵T.F. Johnson, "Aging well in contemporary society," *American Behavioral Scientist*, Volume 39 (1995): 120-130.

of adequate social support.⁶ For African American seniors, residing in nursing facilities is often accompanied with significant losses in their social support. Providing ministry for our African American seniors who reside in nursing facilities should, therefore, be a priority for African American pastors.

The Wisdom of the Seniors

We are called by the Word of God to carry out what He has asked us to do until He returns—the building up of the Kingdom of God. Turning to our seniors is an avenue for this work.

African American seniors are the foundation that the church of today rests upon. Often, seniors are viewed as “out of sight, out of mind.” It is crucial for us to acknowledge the bridge, or wisdom, offered by African American seniors that has brought us safely through history to the present. As seniors are living longer, the African American church must seek the wisdom of the seniors. The author speaks to all born again Christians, but especially to his culture, the African American Church. It is incumbent upon us to honor African American seniors by ministering to those living in nursing homes.

Here again, it is so important to keep the plight of seniors fresh in our minds. It is the elderly who have given us their voices, values, and visions for the role of the African American community and church. This legacy is rich and significant; it must not be forgotten. As a result of the author’s desire to show love for the seniors, the author believes that God has placed a call upon his life to carry the Gospel to the seniors living in

⁶B.P. Payne, and S.H. McFadden, “From loneliness to solitude: Religious and spiritual journey in late life,” In L.E. Thomas and S.A. Eisenhandler, eds., *Aging and Religious Dimension* (Westport, CT: Auburn House, 1994).

nursing homes. This ministry is a new vision for this author. Just as God called Paul on the road to Damascus and directed him to preach. God has called this author to minister to the seniors in the nursing home.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL

In this chapter, the State of the Art, the author will discuss some of the ways ministry is being addressed to the seniors who are living in the nursing home. As an African American Baptist minister, he will address this issue from this perspective.

The Theological Function of the Sermon, Song and Scripture

Our theological vocation for the elderly must emerge out of the sermon, the song, and the scripture. This intervention cannot be separated from the type of ministry that the author envisions for the project. James H. Cone has put his finger on a central truth. The care of our elderly is not a struggle of despair, but of hope. This means that there can be no ministry, in the sense of “Black Theology,” which does not uncover the form of struggle for African Americans in nursing homes as a source for its point of origin. The theological function of this method is simple: For ministry to African American seniors to be meaningful, its functional orientation must reflect upon what it means for elderly African Americans to no longer be able to attend worship service at their specific church. Therefore, through the sermon, song, and scripture, the elderly in nursing homes will get a sense of ministry which emerges out of hope and love for humanity.¹

¹James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1976), 16-17.

The Role of the Sermon in Ministering to Seniors

The spoken word, or preaching is, as James Cone said, best described when the preacher reads a scripture, then closes the Bible and states to the congregation, "I'm going to explain the unexplainable and define the indefinable, ponder over the imponderable, and unscrew the unscrewable. In other words, I'm going to preach the Word, God's Word, this morning."²

It was during this type of ministry that the author's late friend, Reverend Henry Saxton, would in joyful response, move muscles that were not often moved, if only for a short while when he was not feeling any pain. This is what the author enjoyed most about his ministry. During this study, the author will continue to share his late brother's joy, as the author will offer service to three African American nursing facilities. He plans to follow the three interventions, namely, song, scripture and sermon.

The Role of Song in Ministering to Seniors

The song is a theological tool to encourage and equip, as it was back in the days of the Ante-bellum Negro Preacher. It is the author's plan to use this ministering tool to pass the Word and offer hope to the seniors, as it was used in the past to do the same to the slaves. Howard Thurman in his writing, points out that the Ante-bellum Negro Preacher was the greatest single factor in determining spiritual destiny for the slave community. Thurman goes on to write that the Preacher offered hope to the slaves who were considered to be animals by the slave master. It was through this hope offered by Ante-bellum preachers that slaves found strength to continue living in hope for a new life that

²Ibid.

would come someday. Moreover, because the preacher was familiar with the conditions the slaves encountered, he offered words of encouragement to his peers, many who would later express themselves in song. According to Howard Thurman, the preacher reminded the slaves that regardless of their status, they were still children of God. As a result of teaching, many weary, spiritually and physically exhausted slaves found new strength and power gushing into all reaches of their feelings and personalities.³ Moreover, Thurman states, “it is out of this sense a child of God that genius of the Religious folk songs is born.”⁴ The slaves pulled from three sources to maintain survival: 1) The Old Testament, 2) The New Testament, and 3) Nature and their personality. It was this experience that allowed the slaves to express their feelings about the situations they were in and continued assurances of hope. “When Israel was in Egypt land, Let my people go, Oppressed so hard they could not stand, Let my people go: Go down Moses way down in Egypt land and tell old Pharaoh, Let my people go.”⁵

It was through these songs that the Ante-bellum preacher and the slaves found strength to carry on. Moreover, songs provided hope like “My Lord delivered Daniel, My Lord delivered Daniel, Why can’t He deliver me?”⁶

Finally, Thurman states that the Bible provided the slaves with an inspirational vision that all their suffering was not in vain. They discovered strength through the word of God and they applied this strength

³Thurman, *The Negro Spirituals Speak of Life and Death*, 37.

⁴Ibid., 12.

⁵Ibid., 13.

⁶Ibid., 14.

So it is the author's desire to fulfill this great loss. He has observed seniors of his culture react when exposed to a song, scripture or a sermon from their own culture. The author has already pointed out that historically it was the custom of the African American family to take care of their old. This custom is changing, with many seniors unable to rely upon their children for care. When the seniors are unable to take care of themselves, the nursing home is the only option that is available to the family.

A Message of Tenderness

It is often the sermon that is a message of tenderness and the song that tugs at the heartstrings that lifts the burdens of the elderly and brings tears of joy to their soul. Most often, somebody in the worship service will say, "Make them cry this morning, Reverend." Many of our seniors just need the hope of a renewed future expressed through either the sermon or the song. It makes them cry when they realize the Pastor and the Church care. The service must challenge and encourage the seniors to know life is still worth living. The design of this ministry is to bring worship and care of the soul to the nursing home. The seniors living in the nursing home still have a need for spiritual nourishment. For many seniors, they would rather receive this from their personal pastor. The researcher can recall one particular senior, the late Reverend Henry Saxton, who had been placed in a nursing home. During one visit with him, he explained:

Eric, sometimes they offer services in the day room, but I don't go because they don't have the type of service that I like and the preacher does not preach like I like . . . They have no spirit, just cold. I like some fire. I like to feel the Holy Ghost. I like to feel that spirit that keeps me going from day to day.⁷

⁷Personal interview with Reverend Henry Saxton, February 2003.

Then he would break out in a song he used to sing before entering the nursing home. The researcher would join in with him, and they would set that nursing home on fire: a spiritual fire that can be felt by those who are filled with the Holy Ghost. They would go on to minister to one another sometimes for hours. This highlights the importance of testimonials for African American seniors. Providing testimony during a service draws upon the rich cultural heritage of African Americans.

The African American Baptist Church

The Baptist Church has a history of taking care of the senior, once they are not able to care for themselves. This is done through visitation by either the deacons and, when possible, the pastor. Bus ministries have been formed to allow the seniors to attend church. Some churches have constructed senior living buildings in an attempt to keep the seniors together. This allows for easy access for the senior to receive a visit for sickness and fellowship. It can also allow the church to minister in the time of death. All of these actions mentioned earlier are very present in the Baptist Church today.

Many churches will often offer worship services to area nursing homes. These services are sometimes offered by missionary groups of the church. Mini concerts are performed and gifts are often given to all the residents of the nursing homes. Some churches offer these at least once a month.

Other churches will visit different nursing homes on a bi-monthly schedule. Traditionally, these services are supervised through the mission department where an associate minister will often come and offer a sermon and the choir will sing songs. The deacons of the church are sometimes divided into groups to offer communion to some of the residents who are confined to the nursing home.

Presently, media is used to offer a full worship experience that was recorded earlier at the church. These taped services, recorded on either VHS or DVD format, are left with the nursing staff and are often available to all the residents broadcasting over the television system throughout the nursing home. These pre-recorded services are sometimes available to all residents on-demand.

While many religious services are aired on cable, some cable networks provide religious services 24 hours a day. These services that are offered cover many diverse religious practices from all over the nation.

Bus ministries have been formed to offer transportation to those residents who are still able to attend services outside of the nursing home. When possible, the pastor will come and make a personal call upon the residents, especially when the resident is considered sicker than usual, or is close to death.

Concord Baptist Church of Christ in Brooklyn, New York operates a nursing home adjacent to the church. The church has an on-going twenty-four hour ministry to the seniors in the nursing home.

While most of the services are often available to all residents, the pastoral visit is often limited to a member of the church. As this study revealed, there is still a great need to increase the presence of the pastoral visit to the nursing home and, when possible, the residents' desire to have the pastor present a live, on-site service.

Pleasant View Baptist Church in South Carolina describes their ministry to seniors as follows:

Here at Pleasant View, we place a lot of emphasis on SERVICE. We currently have several families ministering in the Taylors/Greer area. Bro. Brent Backer, Bro. Michael Townsend, and Bro. Jason Parham and their families have been serving for quite some time in several of the retirement homes. They present an assortment of

music, singing and Bible-based preaching. Several of the church's young people have taken a special interest in this ministry by providing special music with their instruments and a smiling face for all the residents. Currently, we minister at the Manning House and Bayberry Retirement Homes and the Alterra Sterling Assisted Living Community.⁸

Other Religious Practices

The Catholic community has established nursing homes and retirement centers to care for their seniors. Catholic parishes nearest to the facility provide a priest to ensure the senior receives spiritual nourishment, or sometimes the individual's parish priest will visit.⁹

A majority of the Jewish nursing homes offer to those in their nursing homes a worship experience with which each Jewish resident is familiar. In many of these cases, the rabbi is present or is often considered as part of the staff of these facilities.¹⁰

African Americans living in nursing homes could benefit greatly if they had their own pastor on staff. It would be a great opportunity for bonding with the seniors who have made the nursing home their home.

⁸ Pleasant View Baptist Church, "Ministry to Seniors," Pleasant View Baptist Church, <http://www.pleasantview.org/about/ministries/nursing-home-ministries.html> (accessed 4/3/2007).

⁹ Archdiocese of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁰ Jewish Community Center, Cincinnati, Ohio.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Culturally Responsive Ministry

In this section, the researcher will discuss some thoughts on three areas. Since the African American church is deeply rooted in the life of the African American, it is his desire to provide ministry to a group of people not only because God has commanded us to do so, but also we must learn and respect our heritage. Anne S. Wimberly supports this researcher as she writes:

To honor African American elders means to acknowledge the significance of their years and to treat them as persons of worth. We understand honor to be more than just showing respect, through deference and courtesy. It includes deep appreciation, which we demonstrate through interested listening. We convey genuine enjoyment of them as persons and take joy in their participation in contributions to the community, making room for such participation. Honor also means taking them seriously, which we demonstrate by soliciting their opinions and including them in decisions that affect them. It means serving them in times of need, showing love, conveying appreciation for their humanity, and preserving their dignity. And we demonstrate our love for the elderly out of our love of God and God's love for them.¹

The writer continues,

The honoring of the elders as the underlying motivation for ministry focused on them builds on the traditional ancestral African view that presumes that all persons are value members of God's family and we are therefore deserving of honor. More than this, the motive

¹Ann Streaty Wimberly, *Honoring African American Elders: A Ministry in the Soul Community* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1997), xii.

for honoring elders derives from ancestral views that the actions of God's Love are genuine.²

Wimberly further offers,

As an activity that defines the ministry process, honoring elders includes the activity of those who honor as well as the activity of those who honor emphasizes their sensitivity to needs of elders for inclusion in matters that pertain to them. It embraces the understanding of at least three roles. In supporting and facilitating these roles, community members honor elders. The three R's of honoring Elders are: as recipients of care, as repositories of wisdom, and as resourceful participants of the community life.³

And finally, Wimberly continues to support this researcher's position in this section by writing:

The practice of supporting and responding respectfully to the elders as recipients of care has a long history. This history serves as a helpful framework for looking at current interpretations of honoring elders as recipients of care and what may be reincorporated as a response to present day circumstances. During the era of Slavery, the slave elders were honored and respected by the extended family network.⁴

Jesus showed great concern for his Mother as He prepared for death (John 19:25).

It is at this time that many of our African Americans desire the presence of their pastor in a visit. This is similar to Jesus looking more favorably upon the widow's offer than that of the rich man, because the widow gave all that she had from her heart. Even though they feel as though God is going to carry them through anything in this life, there is still a need to see their personal pastor. Down through the years, pastors have been entrusted with many families' secrets. Moreover the seniors believe that the Bible makes it clear who is to be summoned in times of trouble. The Elder is to be called as he is on many occasions,

²Ibid., 1.

³Ibid., 9.

⁴Ibid., 6-7.

especially in the Black Church as a result of the bond African Americans have with their pastors. The pastor might be the only one who is able to encourage peace in the family, especially to the old Christians of yesterday.⁵ In their time of need, pastoral ministry is vital to African Americans, especially to the seniors. Thus it would be wise if the African American pastors of today would take some time out to learn from the cultural history of the African American church.

According to J. Deotis Roberts,

The black religious experience has always been a stride toward freedom . . . Our minds have been “stayed on freedom,” but means to obtain freedom will vary. At one time the approach may be legal, at another time political, and again it could be economic. It is remarkable how black religious leaders, both clerical and lay, have been able to read the “signs of the times” and act through appropriate means. Black families and churches have been the main institutions participating in the freedom struggle.⁶

This system of adopting in the black family was the practice in the family before coming to America and is present today, says Smith. Thus, he implies that such a practice must continue:

The image of God is reflected by the image in humankind of mutual respect, and ecological responsibility is practiced in the black family in the care of the elderly and in the practice of informal adoptions. “Family members who are homeless or unable to care for themselves for reasons of age, sickness, unemployment, or whatever may be taken into the household of a relative. This ‘absorption mechanism’ is an important facet of the mutual aid system within the black extended family.” Persons in need are provided an opportunity to be a part of another’s family structure, if their family is either unwilling or unable to provide care and nurture.⁶

⁵J. Deotis Roberts, *Roots of a Black Future: Family and Church* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1980), 10.

⁶ Ibid., 46.

⁶Wallace Charles Smith, *The Church in the Life of the Black Family* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2003), 61.

Smith writes of the Black Church,

To experience authentic liberation, black people must begin the process by liberating themselves from the bondage of their own dominant/submissive patterns. History indicates that as a people blacks have always experienced a mutuality of pain and suffering. Black young and old, male and female have not been spared the harsh realities of homelessness, joblessness, and substandard education. In our theology of liberation, black churches and families must not allow the same oppression within our communities that we have experienced from without.

Within the community of shared suffering, we blacks must work with all the force of our being to make sure that the rage which results from our suffering ceases to be turned upon ourselves in destructive ways. Rape, child molestation, battered spouses, "black-on-black" crime are all the sorry results of the suffering shared within the community. Churches must find ways to turn that negative of shared suffering into a positive.⁷

Smith goes on to write that the theology of the black church needs to address the issues:

Black family theology needs also to address the issues of inclusion in order to mobilize action in churches. Black people do not have time to play the male/female sexist games. Black women historically have share equally in black suffering; they must now share equally in black leadership. Churches must begin developing classes, holding workshops, and generally raising the consciousness of our people in this critical issue. Our push for liberation is weakened if our best and brightest female leadership is continually having to face the divided loyalties of being both black and female . . . We as a people can never muster the strength to fight for our total liberation as long as we are allowing ourselves to be split by questions of male dominance and female submission.⁸

Drawing upon the storytelling tradition of African Americans, culturally responsive religious services for African Americans need to incorporate devotions, prayers, and testimonies.

⁷Ibid., 108.

⁸Ibid., 109.

The theological works of J. Deotis Roberts, James H. Cone and Wallace C. Smith frame the researcher's approach to ministry for African American seniors living in nursing homes.⁹ There are three fundamental paradigms that will guide the development and define the practice of this ministry: 1) Ministry through Song, 2) Ministry through Scripture, and 3) Ministry through Sermon. While this is a central focus for the method that this researcher plans to use for these services, this researcher will modify it by adding prayers and testimonials as central features of the service to make it more culturally responsive to African Americans. Thus, the CRS service will be structured as follows:

1. Ministry in song (old hymns and spirituals)
2. Prayers
3. Testimonies (telling their own stories)
4. Scriptures (Old and New Testament stories)
5. Sermons (through storytelling)

The African American church understands the pastoral responsibility of worship and its ministry of comfort. It knows how to speak comfortingly and minister tenderly to the aching hearts, bruised spirits and perplexed minds of those who wrestle daily with the anomalies of racism. Comfort comes from songs born of struggle that tell of a better day and a brighter day and a brighter tomorrow. Comfort comes from the testimonies, stories and autobiographical accounts of those who "have come over a way that with tears has been watered," and are still holding on, fighting on and going on. Comfort comes from a prayer tradition that reminds worshippers that the promises, presence and power of God are available to all who labor to live and love in this "lowland of sorrow." Comfort comes from the messages of preachers who know how to speak to the hurts of their people. Comfort comes from repeated assurances that Jesus has promised "Blessed are

⁹James H. Cone, *For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984), 99-121; J. Deotis Roberts, *Roots of a Black Future: Family and Church* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1980), 39-56; Wallace Charles Smith, *The Church In the Life of the Black Family* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1993), 21-28.

those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (Matthew 5:4) and "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20.)¹⁰

It is the author's position that African American pastors need to take the "Ministry of Help" into the rough places, such as the nursing facilities, as a way to demonstrate care for the sick and elderly. In his assessment, "The African Church" is the spiritual family of the African American community. Many African American scholars have made this point. There is no other institution, beside the family, that makes a greater impact on the lives of African Americans.

It is from this vantage point that this ministry will be presented to African American seniors living in primarily African American nursing homes. These seniors have a need to feel the spirit, as well as a need to express themselves through song, scripture and by hearing the preached word of God. It is, however, a ministry that has and continues to be neglected by the black preacher. Black pastors are too busy or, as stated earlier, they fail to remember the very bridge that was in Edward P. Wimberley's book, *Pastoral Care in the Black Church*. Black preachers have failed to remember the very thing that has sustained us down through the years.

James Deotis Roberts states that the black church is an extended family of caring, sharing, and fellowship. Roberts explains that the black church is the place where one belongs, is affirmed, and finds acceptance. Moreover, the pastor is regarded, in many instances, as a parent figure. The pastor is entrusted as a leader who knows things about the family that are only known to the family. Family secrets are revealed to the pastor because the pastor is able to establish a relationship with church members where

¹⁰William D. Watley, *Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land* (Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications, 1993), 22-23.

confidentiality is maintained by the pastor. Roberts writes that this relationship did not just begin here in America, but back in Africa.¹¹

Moreover, the pastor/member relationship provides a close kinship that binds the black pastor and members together with such closeness that the black pastor is able to provide guidance to the member. This service is valued and readily accepted by the members. Roberts goes on to imply that once a member is accepted in the church, the member becomes part of a large family—the Family of God. Once the member is welcomed into the family, it is the charge of the pastor, who serves as leader of the church, to ensure that the new member is made aware of all the entitlements and responsibilities of being a Christian.

The Pastor's Duties

One of the chief duties that rests upon any pastor is that of directing and supervising the public religious instruction of the congregation from the pulpit, as well as in all other areas of church work. The pastor must administer the ordinances of the church, one of which is to watch over the personal experience and life of the members, to exhort, admonish, reprove and rebuke, as one who is entrusted with the care of souls and who expects to give account of his stewardship.¹²

As a Baptist minister for more than 31 years, this researcher has observed many seniors come closer to the church when many of their family members have left them as a result of death. The senior is often left alone in this world. It is at this time that many

¹¹J. Deotis Roberts, *Roots of a Black Future: Family and Church* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1980).

¹²J. G. Jordan, *The Baptist Standard Church Directory and Busy Pastor's Guide* (Washington, DC: Sunday School Publishing Board, 1929).

seniors become dependent upon the church to provide their needs. It is at this time that the black pastor, as well as the church, is expected to look after the senior. For many, the church is all that they have left in this world, their church family. This author has seen many of the seniors adopt the church as their next of kin, yet they will not just verbalize their dependence upon church. Many seniors will all of their worldly possessions to the church. This practice will be discussed by other authors later in this paper. These seniors are the very paste that sustains the church down through the years.

Nursing Homes and Churches

There are approximately 169 nursing homes in the Cincinnati area.¹³ While these nursing homes may not fit into the category that is defined as African American Nursing Homes, regardless of color, the need still remains that the Christian senior living in these homes still has a need to receive spiritual nourishment. The burden still falls back on the church to fulfill the spiritual needs of these seniors who are living in the nursing homes. While there are approximately 213 Baptist churches alone,¹⁴ regardless of the race of the various leaders of these Baptist churches, the same responsibility falls upon the church and its leaders to provide ministry to these seniors living in these nursing homes. While this author only cited the Baptist churches in the Cincinnati area, there are many more faith communities in the area that could provide services to the seniors. This author still believes the leaders of all those churches are responsible for the spiritual needs of these Christian seniors who are residents of these nursing homes.

¹³Quickbrochures.com, *Directory of Cincinnati Nursing Homes* (Dibbern & Dibbern, 2006).

¹⁴Switchboard, "Baptist Churches," Switchboard.com, <http://www.switchboard.com/churches-baptist/cincinnati/oh/2564-/yellowpages.htm> (accessed 4/3/2007).

The Church's Call

As this document points to the role of the black Baptist church, it is pertinent to discuss some of the beliefs of the black Baptist church. As outlined in the Articles of Faith, "Of the Scriptures,"

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men, divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error, for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried.¹⁵

In addition to this the Baptist church also states this call to the seniors via The Covenant,

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech.¹⁶

Scriptural Call

Scripturally, there are specific passages calling for this ministry in the Old and New Testaments. In this passage, as recorded in the Book of Leviticus 19:32, one can find one of many rules that are offered to Israel. In this instance, the writer offers direction to the people of Israel concerning what is expected of them concerning the aged. They are warned to, "Rise up in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly, and revere your God. I am the Lord."¹⁷

¹⁵J. G. Jordan, *The Baptist Standard Church Directory and Busy Pastor's Guide* (Washington, DC: Sunday School Publishing Board, 1929), 37.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 38. See Appendix D for full text of the Covenant.

¹⁷All scripture used in this document, unless otherwise stated, is quoted from the New International Version, New Scofield Study System. Leviticus 19:32

In this passage, the writer issues several warnings to Israel about how God desires Joseph and his people to live. He gives desired acceptable behavior of his people. *The Interpreter's Bible* states,

To rise when the elderly enter the room is regarded merely as a matter of good manners. The Hebrews connect it with religion and set it down with fear of God (v. 32). The honoring of age, through not necessarily a following of its example, is a bond of society, the recognition of the tradition of wisdom and the past as our inheritance; it so connected with religion because our religion is rooted in history, and history is the sphere of the manifestation of the works of God.¹⁸

The New Testament also supports this ministry to the elderly. In this passage (John 19:25), the writer quotes Jesus as he shows concern for his mother. The hour had come for Jesus to die, and there was no other person He more specifically showed concern for than his own mother. *The Interpreter's Bible* reports that near the cross were Mary, the mother of Jesus, her sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. Mark 15:40 also reports this. "Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome." Matthew 27:56 also records this sight, "They followed him to care for his needs. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Jose, and the mother of Zebedee's son."

This author is trying to make clear Jesus' concern for his older mother. He looked upon his mother and showed concern for her not because she was his mother, but because she was old and he was dying. However, he entrusted the care of his mother to his brother. He instructed that he take care of his mother who was old. And out of obedience

¹⁸George Arthur Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreter's Bible: The Holy Scriptures*, Vol. 12 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1984), 278.

to Jesus, even as a result of being obedient to the Master in His dying hour, His mother was taken away and cared for. “Woman, behold thy son! Son, behold thy mother!”

Genesis 25:8-9 offers further support for this researcher’s project. “Altogether, Abraham lived a hundred and seventy-five years. Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people.”

Theological Constructs

The scripture that most fully encompasses the need for this ministry is

I Corinthians 13:

Love is patient . . . love is kind; is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness but rejoices with the truth, bears all thing, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

In addition, Galatians 5:13-14 states, “You, my brothers, were called to be free.

But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather serve one another in love.

The entire law is summed up in a single command: Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Again, in Romans 13:9-10, the directive is given, “The commandments, do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not covet, and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule, Love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no harm to its neighbor, therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”

Similarly, Luke 10:27 tells us, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Finally, Colossians 3:12 repeats this message with the following: “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”

Context

The focus of this project will take place at three primarily African American Nursing Homes located in Cincinnati, Ohio. The first, Oak Pavilion, is a nursing facility that houses approximately 150 patients. The nursing home is located near three major hospitals: The Christ Hospital, University (of Cincinnati) Hospital and the Veteran’s Administration Hospital. When patients are no longer able to live by themselves, Oak Pavilion is an option where patients can come and continue to receive the medication and medical care that is needed while at the same time they are able to take part in the many activities offered at the nursing home. But most of all, they meet other patients who are suffering from some of the same issues, thus creating an opportunity to meet new friends.

Lake Ridge, the second site that will be used for research, is a primarily African American nursing facility located in Mt. Airy, a small community located on the north side of the city of Cincinnati. This nursing home was built to offer continuous medical care to patients who were no longer able to live alone. This nursing home offered many activities that the patient would have an opportunity to take part in, as well as a chance to meet new friends, some of whom share the same illnesses that they have.

Wood Edge Point, the third and final site that will be used in this research, is located in Avondale that serves as home for many patients from all areas of Cincinnati. The nursing home houses about 175 beds for patients who are no longer able to live alone. This facility offers many daily activities where patients are able to meet new people, as

well as remain in a place where the patients are able to continue to get the medical attention needed for them to sustain life.

The elderly desire to have spiritual services. Religious visitation is often available in some way to all residents. However, many residents are either not able to get up out of the bed or they just simply find that the service that is being offered is not something they want to be a part of because, in many ways, it does nothing for their inner-spirit because it is not a part of their culture. They have a desire to hear and participate in something they are familiar with. They have a desire for the “old time” religion. This is the kind of religious service that they took pride in being a part of before they entered the nursing home. Many of the residents either remain in their room and/or remember what it used to be like when they were able to attend church.

As discussed in the writings of J. Deotis Roberts, Wallace Smith, and James Cone, the church has always been a great source of strength for African Americans. It can be traced as far back as slavery where the slave’s master did not permit religion and its expression. However, it was practiced in what is now known as the underground. It was carried through song in ways only known to the slaves. The slave master could not understand the creative ways of the slaves. It was this kind of religion that the African American has become accustomed to and since they practiced this style of religion before coming to the nursing home, the desire still remains in the resident’s heart to continue this style until death should set them free.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this study was a qualitative research design that involved the use of interview questions for the residents and Context Associates and field observation of the residents by the Context Associates and the author. The use of the qualitative research design was influenced by John Creswell's writings in *Research Design*. The qualitative method was selected because the study was to take place in a natural setting, three local nursing homes. The researcher was on-site to observe and encourage the participation of the nursing home residents to facilitate the research project and collect the data. Using this method enabled the researcher to develop a richer level of detail about the residents and to take an active role in the study.

Qualitative research uses a variety of methods that are interactive in design. In this case, the use of nursing home residents allowed for a fluid, interactive process. The collected data was compiled from the participants and nursing home staff members. As a qualitative researcher, the author has learned that the involvement of the participants is crucial to the success of the project. The importance of building rapport with the participants was noted in their willingness to talk openly with this author. A bond of trust was built between the author and the participants that resulted in the author having more credibility with the nursing home residents.

This method was helpful in collecting data, as it employed the use of open-ended interview questions for the participants and staff members, and observations of the participants by both the staff members and the author. The qualitative method is emergent rather than tightly prefigured. Several things can occur and evolve while doing a qualitative study. The questions the author asks can change, further redefine, and influence the results. The author can learn what to ask and to whom the questions should be addressed. The data collected can change as in the case of the author getting a different reaction from the residents than was expected. The author took field notes on the behaviors and responses of the participants. After each service, the author interviewed residents of the nursing home, as well as staff members who work with the residents on a daily basis.

The process of data analysis involved making sense out of the oral responses to the interview questions and the observed behaviors exhibited by the residents of the nursing homes. This allowed for movement into a deeper understanding of the themes that emerged from the interview data. It involved using open-ended questions, which required asking general questions and developing themes from the information supplied by the residents. As the interview question data were analyzed, several themes became clear to the author. These themes were divided into categories of information called coding. In *Research Design*,¹ Creswell outlines the six steps a qualitative researcher must follow in data collection:

¹ John Creswell, *Research Design* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003).

1. Organize and prepare the data for analysis. This involves transcribing interview materials and field notes and arranging the materials into categories.
2. Read through all the data. A first step is to obtain a general sense of what the data indicate, what is the feeling of the data that may include its tone, impression and credibility and the use of the information.
3. Begin detailed analysis with a coding process. This would include placing the materials into categories or chunks.
4. Use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or noticeable themes that are now clear as a result of collecting this data that can come in narrative form. This author interconnected the themes present from the interviews to discover the themes emerging out of the interviews.
5. Advance how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative. The most popular approach is the use of narrative passages to convey the findings. This might be a discussion, quotation or multiple perspectives with connecting themes.
6. A final step in data analysis involves making an interpretation of the data. What are the lessons learned based on the results of this research? It can also ask new questions that may not have been asked before. Thus, the qualitative researcher can provide interpretation that forms the foundation for future action and change.

Participants

The participants in this study were forty-five African American seniors residing in three local nursing homes. The Context Associates helped identify the forty-five seniors who participated in the study. The participants were interviewed and observed in order to collect qualitative data.

Design

The methodology used in this project was an exploratory, qualitative research design. The treatment that was used was a series of three culturally responsive religious services facilitated by the author at the three respective nursing homes. Utilizing three different nursing homes allows for environmental triangulation, thus helping to confirm the validity of the services. A sample of 45 participants from a total of three nursing homes was identified by the Context Associates for interviews. The Context Associates were also interviewed. This provided multiple sources of information regarding the interviewed participants.

The choice of an exploratory, qualitative research design was based on multiple factors. The author desired to gain an honest response from the seniors living in the nursing homes. The present author found no published research in the area of providing Culturally Responsive Services (CRS) to seniors in nursing homes. Thus, the research was exploratory in nature as a first step in beginning to understand how CRS might impact seniors. Interviewing the participants and the staff members and observing the participants were the most viable data collection techniques in using an exploratory framework. Also,

these data collection techniques were pragmatic in that they represented techniques the Context Associates were comfortable with permitting in their nursing homes.

The residents were interviewed using the following questions:

1. How did the service benefit you?
2. Have you felt happier/more content since the services?
3. What did you like most about the service?
4. Would you enjoy more services like this in the future?
5. Have you felt more energized?
6. Have you started participating in other activities?
7. Was there anything missing from this service? Something additional you would have liked to be included?

The Context Associates were interviewed using the following questions:

1. Did the resident mention anything about the service?
2. Have you noticed any changes in the resident since the resident attended the services (e.g., increased positive mood, increased energy, more interest in participating in other activities)?

The use of two different sources of data regarding the participants provided a richer data pool. The data was then subjected to coding to illuminate themes.

Problem Statement

African Americans seniors living in primarily African American nursing homes need ministry that can occur within these nursing homes. The seniors can face their problems with courage and assurance when exposed to their culture through the singing of the old hymns or the preached word of an African American preacher or through scripture

reminding them of the hope that is promised by God. They are inclined to be like that faithful servant who has made up his/her mind to follow Jesus until death sets them free. In the words of the old song, "I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back."

Even though pastors have been commanded to carry the gospel to all the lands in the 28th Chapter of Matthew, many ministers have found more value in remaining with the church while delegating the mission to handle the seniors in the nursing home. While this can work, many seniors will tell you there is nothing like seeing the face of one's pastor. Some ministers sense the seniors' pains, despair, helplessness and powerlessness. It is from these thoughts that the researcher must address this great need and attempt to feed the flock as Jesus has commanded us to do.

Solutions

The researcher will go to these nursing homes and preach the good news that Christ commanded him to do. This researcher realizes it is his duty to provide ministry to all of God's children, but especially to the elderly. This is not to say that ministry does not exist in some form or another in all nursing homes. It is, however, the researcher's purpose for this study to provide culturally responsive ministry to African American seniors residing in nursing facility. This researcher will preach, sing and offer encouragement through God's word. It is his belief that the seniors will remember and respond in a positive way that medication cannot produce. This researcher submits that these African Americans living in nursing homes will respond by the physical moving of muscles that have not been moved for months or even years. This researcher believes they will be compelled to come out of their rooms to hear what the pastor has to say. However,

it is the researcher's goal for this study to confirm that the African American pastor is accepted as one of their own. The pastor represents their culture and is able to speak a language that can only be truly appreciated and understood by this generation of African American seniors who are survivors of segregation. He/she can share issues of oppression that the senior is not soon to forget. It is the same oppression that is still felt by many today. Only the oppressed will be able to understand. One might ask how anyone can truly understand the way the seniors are feeling when so many different cultures have not experienced the same oppression that many of the African American seniors living in the nursing homes have lived with through much of their lives.

Proposed Hypothesis

Once this ministry is offered to African American seniors in local nursing homes, it is hoped that it will result in positive changes for the participants. It is hoped that African American seniors living in nursing homes, after participation in the culturally responsive services, might report an improved attitude, an affirmation of their spiritual values, renewed and improved behavior, and fulfillment of their religious beliefs. It is hoped that they will begin responding to the songs, scripture, and spoken word.

It is the same religion that James Cone discussed in his book as the need to express religion from out of their culture that has followed the African American from Africa to a land of oppression, so much so, that the African American living in an African American Nursing Home will act out a black theology of liberation that can only be felt and understood by people of the same oppressed culture.² These are people who have been to

² James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1976), 16-17.

the water, been tested, survived and are not afraid to tell their story. It was their faith in God that would some day make it all right. It is the same fire that the author believes is hidden in the hearts of African American seniors living in nursing homes.

However, critical to this ministry is the hope and Christian fellowship that will be extended and experienced with this unique group of African American seniors. After all the data is collected, this author believes the data will reveal to African American pastors the importance of providing culturally responsive religious services to African American seniors living in nursing homes. These ministers will visit not only because Jesus has commanded that they do so in the 28th Chapter of Matthew, but because the data supports that such religious services have a positive impact on African American seniors.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE FIELD EXPERIENCE

Analysis

The collected data was analyzed by using the coding procedure. Interview data was transcribed onto forms by the researcher, with a column for coding major themes that emerged. The interview data was reviewed and each one was compared to previous ones to allow for attention to the emerging themes. The following major themes were identified and placed into four categories: attitudes, behavior, beliefs, and values. The interview data was reviewed again and coded according to the frequency of occurrence for each theme.

Findings

The findings were organized for clarity. Each category was examined using interviewed data from the participants and the contact associates. Tables 1-4 display the results in number, as well as, percentages.

Table 1. Attitude.

N = 45 Total Interviewed, T=15	Number/Percentage of Responses		
	<u>Oak Pavilion</u>	<u>Wood Edge Point</u>	<u>Lake Ridge</u>
Increased positive mood	4/(26.7%)	5/(33.3%)	5/(33.3%)
The service made my day	4/(26.7%)	0	0
I had a good time	2/(13.3%)	0	0
The service reminded me of my church at home	5/(33.3%)	0	0
The service was uplifting	0	3/(20.0%)	0
The service made me feel good	0	5/(33.3%)	0
I feel more fulfilled	0	2/(13.3%)	0
I feel content	0	0	4/(26.7%)
I really had a good time	0	0	3/(20.0%)
Service made me feel at home	0	0	3/(20.0%)
TOTALS	15/(100%)	15/(100%)	15/(100%)

Category #1: Attitude

The participants reported that they had a better attitude as a result of participating in the culturally responsive services (CRS). At Oak Pavilion, four (26.7 percent) of the residents reported increased positive mood, four (26.7 percent) reported “the service made my day,” two (13.3 percent) reported “I had a good time,” and five (33.3 percent) reported “the service reminded me of my church at home.”

At Wood Edge Point, five (33.3 percent) residents reported “increased positive mood,” three (20.0 percent) reported “the service was uplifting,” five (33.3 percent)

reported “the service made me feel good,” and two (13.3 percent) reported “I feel more fulfilled.”

At Lake Ridge, five (33.3 percent) residents reported “increased positive mood,” four (26.7 percent) responded with “I feel content,” three (20.0 percent) responded with “I really had a good time,” and three (20.0 percent) responded “The service made me feel at home.”

Table 2. Values.

N = 45 Total Interviewed, T= 15	Number/Percentage of Responses		
Most Significant Service Element	<u>Oak Pavilion</u>	<u>Wood Edge Point</u>	<u>Lake Ridge</u>
Prayer	3/(20.0%)	2/(13.3%)	0
Sermon	2/(13.3%)	0	4/(26.7%)
Testimonies	5/(33.3%)	5/(33.3%)	5/(33.3%)
Hymns	5/(33.3%)	4/(26.7%)	3/(20.0%)
Scripture	0	4/(26.7%)	3/(20.0%)
TOTALS	15/(100%)	15/(100%)	15/(100%)

Category #2: Values

At Oak Pavilion, three (20.0 percent) residents responded as to the most significant element of the service as prayer, two (13.3 percent) responded that it was the sermon, five (33.3 percent) responded testimonies, and five (33.3 percent) responded the hymns.

At Wood Edge Point, residents indicated their preference as two (13.3 percent) stating prayer, five (33.3 percent) stating testimonies, four (26.7 percent) stating hymns, and four (26.7 percent) stating scriptures.

Residents at Lake Ridge indicated their preferences as four (26.7 percent) for the sermon, five (33.3 percent) for the testimonies, three (20.0 percent) for hymns, and three (20.0 percent) for scripture.

Table 3. Behavior.

N = 45 Total Interviewed, T=15	Number/Percentage of Responses		
	<u>Oak Pavilion</u>	<u>Wood Edge Point</u>	<u>Lake Ridge</u>
Motivated	4/(26.7%)	5/(33.3%)	5/(33.3%)
I feel more energized	3/(20.0%)	3/(20.0%)	4/(26.7%)
Renewed	2/(13.3%)	3/(20.0%)	2/(13.3%)
More positive	<u>6/(40.0%)</u>	<u>4/(33.3%)</u>	<u>4/(26.7%)</u>
TOTALS	15/(100%)	15/(100%)	15/(100%)

Category #3: Behavior

The participants uniformly reported that the Culturally Responsive Services (CRS) are desired. At Oak Pavilion, four (26.7 percent) residents reported feeling motivated as a result of the services. Three (20.0 percent) stated “I feel more energized.” Two (13.3 percent) residents said they felt renewed and six (40.0 percent) reported feeling more positive.

At Wood Edge point, five (33.3 percent) residents reported feeling motivated, three (20.0 percent) reported feeling more energized, three (20.0 percent) felt renewed and four (26.7 percent) reported feeling more positive.

Residents at Lake Ridge reported the following: five (33.3 percent) said they felt motivated, four (26.7 percent) reported feeling more energized, two (13.3 percent) felt renewed and four (26.7 percent) felt more positive.

Table 4. Beliefs.

N = 45 Total Interviewed, T=15	Number/Percentage of Responses		
	<u>Oak Pavilion</u>	<u>Wood Edge Point</u>	<u>Lake Ridge</u>
I desire more CRS services	4/(26.7%)	5/(33.3%)	5/(33.3%)
The service fulfilled my spiritual beliefs	3/(20.0%)	3/(20.0%)	3/(20.0%)
The service fulfilled my spiritual expectations	2/(13.3%)	3/(20.0%)	2/(13.3%)
Provided spiritual nourishment	<u>6/(40.0%)</u>	<u>4/(33.3%)</u>	<u>5/(33.3%)</u>
TOTALS	15/(100%)	15/(100%)	15/(100%)

Category #3: Beliefs

Four (26.7 percent) residents at Oak Pavilion reported that they desire more CRS services. Three (20.0 percent) residents stated that the service fulfilled his/her spiritual beliefs. Two residents (13.3 percent) responded that the service fulfilled his/her spiritual expectations and six (40.0 percent) replied that the services provided spiritual nourishment.

At Wood Edge Point, five (33.3 percent) of the residents reported that they desired more of the CRS services. Three (20.0 percent) residents reported that the service fulfilled his/her spiritual beliefs. Three (20.0 percent) residents said that the service fulfilled his/her spiritual expectations and four (26.7 percent) of the residents replied that the services provided spiritual nourishment.

Lake Ridge residents reported the following: five (33.3 percent) of the residents stated that they desired more CRS services, three (20.0 percent) reported that the service fulfilled his/her spiritual beliefs, two (13.3 percent) said the service fulfilled his/her spiritual expectations, and five (33.3 percent) replied the services provided spiritual nourishment.

Observations

This author enjoyed observing residents expressing and confirming their joy for the service. It also allowed him an opportunity to see residents who had suffered strokes and other illnesses express their religious belief. For the author, these observations confirm that while one may be unable to attend church outside of the nursing home, their spiritual needs still need to be met. Thus, this opportunity allowed the author a chance to bond with the residents.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

Reflection

Ministry to the seniors who are living in a nursing home is much different than ministering to the traditional congregation. Many of the nursing home residents suffer from various health problems. Some residents have suffered strokes, loss of body parts, some even suffer from memory loss due to old age and dementia. While these are not the only reasons why they have made the nursing home their home, these are just a few reasons why they are living in the nursing home. Whatever the reason, any person who desires to offer ministry to such a group must approach this group with the knowledge that the clients will require time to accept and comprehend what is being offered to them.

Not that they are some strange animal, for they are men and women just like us, but they have suffered some kind of health problems. Still, if given the opportunity to express themselves in some form to confirm their feelings, they will do so.

This researcher was able to observe such responses while offering the Culturally Responsive Services in the nursing home. Anyone who offers ministry to the senior will gain a rich experience like no other ministry can offer. The ministry that is available in the nursing home is a ministry that one will not find in the general congregation.

This author states this because many times the ministry that is offered in the church is to a group of people who have assembled by choice. You may say that the nursing home

clients come on their own. Yes, this is true, but the difference between the outside church and the nursing home is that the congregation, for the most part, attends church whenever or wherever they desire. But the nursing home residents, due to their health problems, are limited to where they can go. They are limited to the services that are offered by the nursing home.

If the service is different from what they are accustomed to, or if a service offered in the nursing home does not uplift their spirits, the residents like anyone else may refuse to attend as this researcher discovered while in the nursing home setting. For some, they experience what this researcher believes is spiritual starvation.

It was revealed that the CRS helped them to recall the type of service they were once part of before coming to the nursing home.

Summary

As the research revealed, religion has, and always will, play a great role in the life of African Americans. It did back in the motherland of Africa; it certainly did during slavery and the years of segregation, and it still does in the present day. It is only through the preached word that Harriett Tubman was inspired to escape from slavery.

People of oppression take what they are given, be it little or much, and work with what they have until the little becomes much. Just as the Jewish people will never allow Nazi Germany to be forgotten in our minds, oppressed African Americans will never allow their faith in God to die.

Dr. William D. Watley pointed out in his book *Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land*, to some prayer is an act, but to oppressed people who have and continue to

deal with injustice, prayer is not just an act but a time to talk to the Creator who has promised to set the table in order for when He returns to earth to set the captives free.

Prayers, the singing of old hymns, the opportunity to share their stories to pass on to the future generations, reflecting on how we made it over, these are the things that keep us from forgetting the struggle and becoming content with the world as we see it today.

Too many things are different, but then not too different as Dr. Weldon Johnson wrote, "lest we forget the hills we have come over." For the seniors who are now living in the nursing home, this is a legacy of people who have and continue to experience oppression.

When given a chance to express their feelings, they reflect upon their lives and conclude that it was only God who has sustained them and brought them through.

Yet they respect God's preacher, the one who has been chosen to answer the question, "Is there a Word from the Lord?" The preacher is expected to pass on the word from the Lord that will give them strength from day to day to endure through these dark cloudy days. God's Word will enable them to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

After all is said and done, the senior living in the nursing home will want to be reminded of their reward for fighting a good fight and keeping the faith. They love to hear about their golden crown and golden slippers that will be given to the ones who remain faithful in the fight once the fight is complete.

Conclusion

As mentioned earlier in this project, seniors not only attended the CRS but participated as well. One of the CRS's offered an opportunity for them to express some of their personal feelings, which included their belief of what God means to them. Since the

CRS allowed the residents to feel comfortable, with their spirit often uplifted, it resulted in an increased desire to participate in the CRS. Not only did the CRS inspire the residents in such a way that the residents were energized by the CRS, but it appeared to fulfill some of the residents' values, and thus, fulfilling some of the acts or things they have expected to see in a service.

There is no better way to describe the residents' responses than to observe the behavior of the residents during a CRS. Seniors actively engaged in the services. They sang and told stories. It was very clear to the researcher from the interviews that the residents enjoyed the CRS.

On many occasions the residents expressed their appreciation for the CRS. Many of the residents expressed their faith by joining in the singing of many of the songs that both the residents and the Context Associates requested.

It was often at this time that the residents would reveal to the entire group that they once either sang or directed a choir before coming to live in the nursing home. This researcher had provided an opportunity to express themselves. This opportunity allowed them a chance to recall past church experiences. It also inspired many to share their talents with others whether it was singing, praying, expressing, or conveying how good God has been to them.

Seniors showed movement (body movement, clapping their hands, nodding their head, etc.) that confirmed their appreciation of the spiritual nourishment being offered. Seniors, like any other spiritual group, will react to anything they enjoy. As this researcher observed the nine services that were offered to the nursing homes, he noticed residents reaching out to the service in whatever way they could. Whether it was the nodding of

their head or clapping their hands, it was clear that they were confirming their feelings for the CRS.

There were many residents with varying degrees of mobility. However, they moved what they were able to move. The researcher remembers one resident who only had the use of one of his arms. He would raise that one arm up to confirm his feeling for the CRS and emphasize his agreement with what was being said. Another resident was unable to use her legs, but she was able to move her lips. This resident joined in many of the songs that were sung. The researcher has pointed out just a few cases from the observations at the nursing homes. There were many more residents who expressed their appreciation for the CRS in multiple, creative ways.

Church support is needed to allow nursing homes to offer more religious services in their daily schedule. Activity staff members have activities that are offered each day to residents that are required by the state in order to function as a nursing facility.

As described earlier in this document, we know that as seniors become older, religion becomes more important than ever. As death becomes a more immediate concern, seniors may turn more to their commitment to God. This commitment is often expressed and enhanced through participation in the religious services offered through the nursing homes. Even if it was not a major concern before entering the nursing home, access to religious services certainly becomes a priority for the residents at this time. It can also be extrapolated from the present study that residents' behaviors and mood will often improve as a result of their attendance and participation in a CRS.

Another factor that can impact seniors is their isolation from others, with many seniors remaining in their rooms. This researcher believes it is the mission of most nursing homes to keep all the residents as busy and as content as possible. It is the feeling of this

writer that nursing homes would benefit from scheduling more religious services in their yearly schedule. Such scheduling will not only provide more opportunity for residents to interact with one another but it will also provide an opportunity for more spiritual nourishment. These CRS's provide spiritual nourishment both to the residents and nursing staff.

Staff morale could be much higher if residents were satisfied and content. Staff will often feel good when the residents they care for are happy. One of the reasons why this reaction will take place is that, if the resident is happy, they will often respect and accept and show appreciation for what the nursing staff is doing for the resident. When the nursing staff members feel like the residents appreciate what they are doing for the residents, the nursing staff members will often do more for the residents than what is required. When the nursing staff members feel appreciated, they will approach the job with good morale that could result in fewer conflicts, not only for staff members, but also for the nursing home in general. When the staff morale is high, the nursing staff will often look forward to coming to work. As discovered from the information received from the CRS, resident interviews, nursing staff interviews and observation, residents can become obstinate and disrespectful to both the nursing staff and their peers.

Suggestions for Further Research

As the present study was to examine the impact of the CRS, it provided some information about phenomena (providing CRS to seniors in nursing homes) that was previously not available in the literature. Building upon the information gleaned in the present study, future research could perhaps move more into the explanatory, descriptive, and/or predictive research method arenas. For example, the use of CRS in nursing homes

could be more directly tied to variables that predict better health. Future research could focus on the experience of seniors who are provided the opportunity to leave the nursing home to visit a traditional congregation and ascertain the differences between visiting the congregation or having the minister provide the CRS in the nursing home. As a result of this project, this researcher has committed to continue this ministry with these three nursing homes on a monthly basis.

As the data revealed, the CRS was accepted and desired by the seniors living in nursing homes. It is suggested that these services continue, not only in these facilities, but prayerfully the CRS will become available in additional nursing homes. It is strongly recommended that African-American pastors increase their presence in the nursing homes and offer more services to these seniors who are locked out of traditional worship opportunities. As a result of these CRS services, the seniors realized that others cared about them. They were able to reaffirm spiritual feelings that had been repressed. As discussed earlier in this document and support by other authors, these elderly people, who have faced oppression in their lifetimes, found strength in their faith in God. It was the exposure to the sermons, hymns, prayers, testimonies and spoken word that offered the seniors hope in the midst of their despair. If only for a short period, they forgot about their immediate concerns and recalled a song or scripture that provided comfort and strength. As a minister and researcher, a miracle took place. It was an opportunity to see the seniors react to the services being provided by raising their hands, nodding their heads or shouting out with joy, thus reaffirming their spiritual feelings. Such a scene was a powerful testimony to anyone desiring to provide services to seniors. It is recommended that this ministry continue and be further analyzed through future studies possibly

examining the effect of theology upon the physical and mental aspects of the aging process.

APPENDIX A
RESIDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Questions	Notes	Coding
<p>Resident Interview How did the service affect you?</p> <p>Do you feel happier, more content since the service?</p> <p>What did you like most about the service: Prayer Testimonies Scriptures Sermon hymns</p> <p>Would you enjoy more services like this in the future?</p> <p>Do you feel more energized since the service?</p> <p>Do you feel motivate to participate in other activities since attending this Service?</p> <p>Was there anything missing from this service? Was there something additional you would like to include in the service?</p>		

APPENDIX B
CONTEXT ASSOCIATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Context Associates Questionnaire

Lake Ridge Nursing Home
Oak Pavilion Nursing Home
Wood Edge Point Nursing Home

Coding

1. Did the residents mention anything about the service?

2. Have you noticed any changes in the residents since they attended the service (e.g. increased energy, muscle movement, more interest in participating in other activities)?

APPENDIX C
CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SERVICE PROGRAMS

Service #1
Lake Ridge Nursing Home
Oak Pavilion Nursing Home
Wood Edge Point Nursing Home

- Devotion: *I Will Trust In The Lord*
 Shine On Me
 What A Friend We Have In Jesus
 I'm Glad I Got Good Religion
- Scripture: Gospel of John 3:1-13 "Ye must be born again"
- Hymn: Solo *Yes, God Is Real*
 I'm On The Battlefield For The Lord
- Prayer: *Sweet Hour of Prayer*
- Testimonies:
- Hymn: *Amazing Grace*
 Solo *Standing On The Promises Of God*
- Sermon: Daniel 3: 17-18 "Standing on Your Faith "
- Closing Hymn: *Leaning On The Everlasting Arms*
- Benediction

Service #2
Lake Ridge Nursing Home
Oak Pavilion Nursing Home
Wood Edge Point Nursing Home

- Devotion: *Shine On Me*
I Will Trust In The Lord
What A Friend We Have In Jesus
This Little Light Of Mine
- Scripture: Psalm 121: "I will lift up eyes unto the hills..."
- Hymn: *When We All Get To Heaven*
I Will Trust In The Lord
- Prayer: *Sweet Hour Of Prayer*
- Testimonies:
- Hymn: Solo *His Eye Is On The Sparrow*
Glory Hallelujah
- Sermon: Gospel of John 5:2-9 "An Experience at the Pool"
- Closing Hymn: *Leaning On The Everlasting Arms*
- Benediction

Service #3
Lake Ridge Nursing Home
Oak Pavilion Nursing Home
Wood Edge Point Nursing Home

- Devotion: *I Will Trust In The Lord*
 Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior
 The Old Ship Of Zion
- Scripture: Psalm 23 “The Lord is my Shepherd . . .”
- Hymn: Solo *There Will Be Peace In The Valley*
 Near The Cross
- Prayer: *Sweet Hour Of Prayer*
- Testimonies:
- Hymn: Solo *I Won't Complaint*
 Oh, The Blood Of Jesus
- Sermon: I Corinthians 11:26
- The Lord's Supper:
- Hymn: *The Drinking Of The Wine*
- Closing Hymn: *Leaning On The Everlasting Arms*

APPENDIX D
BAPTIST CHURCH COVENANT

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour; and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, angels and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge and holiness; to give it a place in our affections, prayers and services above every organization of human origin; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrine; to contribute cheerfully and regularly, and God has prospered us, towards its expenses, for the support of a faithful and evangelical ministry among us, the relief of the poor and the spread of the Gospel throughout the world. In case of difference of opinion in the church, we will strive to avoid a contentious spirit, and if we cannot unanimously agree, we will cheerfully recognize the right of the majority to govern.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion; to study diligently the word of God; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintance; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be kind and just to those in our employ, and faithful in the service we promise others; endeavoring in the purity of heart and good will towards all men to exemplify and commend our holy faith.

We further engage to watch over, to pray for, to exhort and stir up each other unto every good word and work; to guard each other's reputation, not needlessly exposing the infirmities of others; to participate in each other's joys, and with tender sympathy bear one another's burdens and sorrows; to cultivate Christian courtesy; to be slow to give or take

offense, but always ready for reconciliation, being mindful of the rules of the Savior in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, to secure it without delay; and through life, amid evil report, and good report, to seek to live to the glory of God, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

When we remove from this place, we engage as soon as possible to unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's word.

GLOSSARY

African American Nursing Home: Any nursing home that is acutely aware and sensitive to the culture and habits of its residents regardless of location.

African American Senior: A group of aged people who have embraced and carried on worship and serving down through the years. These people pass on the celebration of worship from one generation to the next generation.

Articles of Faith: Twenty-four principles of basic theological belief adopted by the black Baptist Church.

Black Baptist Church: A group of baptized believers who come together to worship, praise and celebrate the goodness of the Lord through the good and bad times. While membership is open to all, the customs and worship embraced are of an Afro-centric nature

Black Baptist Preacher: An individual called by God to oversee the spiritual life of Baptist believers.

Black Baptist Church Covenant: See Black Baptist Covenant enclosed.

Black Theology: Is defined as reading and interpreting the Bible through the eyes of the oppressed people. It is the ability to view the goodness of God in spite of this oppression.

Busy Pastor's Guide: A daily help for pastoral reference.

Context Associates: Activity director for the nursing home.

Element of the Service: Prayer, sermon, testimonies, hymns, and scripture.

Fulfillment: Satisfaction of a spiritual need.

Nursing Staff: Any personnel working in the nursing home.

Spirituality: A belief, knowledge or awareness of an inner felling that is biblically based.

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